

THE ABOLITIONIST

Coloradans Against the Death Penalty

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November 2008

Annual Dinner November 20, 2008

Abolitionist of the Year Award to Representative Paul Weissmann, and Keynote Speaker Abe Bonowitz

Please join us on November 20, 2008 for the annual CADP dinner where we honor Colorado State Representative Paul Weissman as the CADP Abolitionist of the Year. Representative Weissmann is a third term Democrat from Colorado's 12th District and has a long history of opposing the death penalty and courageously introducing legislation to abolish the death penalty in Colorado. Most recently, Representative Weissmann was the prime sponsor for House Bill 07-1094, a bill that would have repealed the death penalty as a sentencing option and created a Cold Case Unit within the Colorado Bureau of Investigation to assist local law enforcement agencies in the investigation of homicides that have been open for more than a year. The resulting savings would instead be used to catch criminals still walking the streets of Colorado. While the House Judiciary Committee passed the bill (7-4), it was unfortunately killed by the House. Introducing Representative Weissman will be Howard Morton, founder of Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons.

(Dinner Details Inside)

Our keynote speaker will be Abe Bonowitz who co-founded and directed Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty from 1997 to 2008, when he took a position with the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. Bonowitz has been working to educate the public about human rights problems, in particular the death penalty and the need for alternatives to the death penalty, for over 17 years. Bonowitz has gained first hand knowledge of the issue by working in the death penalty section of the Ohio Public Defender Commission, with murder victims' family members, and with death row inmates in Alabama, California, Florida, Ohio, Texas and other states as well. He appears briefly in the film "Dead Man Walking" and has worked closely on several projects with author and spiritual advisor Helen Prejean. From 2005 until 2008, Bonowitz served first as a consultant and then as Field Manager with [New Jerseyans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty](#), the organization whose work was completed when NJ Governor John Corzine signed the bill that abolished New Jersey's death penalty in December 17, 2007.

Colorado News: Jury Says Death Penalty for Sir Mario Owens

On June 16, 2008, an Arapahoe County jury sentenced Sir Mario Owens, 23, to death for the murder of potential witness Javad Marshall-Fields and his fiancée Vivian Wolfe. Over a year ago on April 3, 2007, Owens was sentenced to receive life in prison without the possibility of parole for the murder of Gregory Vann at Lowry Park in Aurora on July 4, 2004. He was also sentenced to an additional 64 years for trying to kill Javad Marshall-Fields and Alvin Bell during the Lowry Park incident (both men survived). Marshall-Fields and

Wolfe were murdered in June 2005. The all-white jury deliberated for six hours in Arapahoe District Court and unanimously decided that Owens be put to death by legal injection. He was found to be guilty on two counts of first-degree murder. Owens is the second man on Colorado's death row. The first inmate, Nathan Dunlap, is currently appealing his case in the U.S. District Court. Robert Ray, co-defendant of Sir Mario Owens, is also facing the death penalty and jury selection in his case is scheduled to begin in February of 2009.

United States Supreme Court Says No Death Penalty for the Rape of a Child

In June of this year, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Kennedy v. Louisiana* ruled that the death penalty is unconstitutional as a punishment for the rape of a child. It was a 5-4 decision that overruled death penalty laws in Louisiana and five other states (Georgia, Montana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas). The two men who have been sentenced to death for child rape will receive new, life without parole sentences. Justice Anthony M. Kennedy stated that there was "A distinction between

intentional first-degree murder on the one hand and nonhomicide crimes against individual persons,' even 'devastating' crimes like the rape of a child..." He also stated that death penalty for child rape did not meet the 'evolving standards of decency,' a key factor in the court judges death penalty cases. This case should put to rest recent attempts by some Colorado legislators to add certain sexual assault on children crimes to those eligible for the death penalty.

A report in Scientific American, 2008 September, page 18, "**Who Will Die?**", by Larry Greenemeier:

"Researchers have built a computer system that can predict which death-row inmates are most likely to be executed. It consists of 18 computer processors that analyzed data on about 1,000 death-row prisoners, including their sex, age, race, schooling and whether they were ultimately executed or spared. Then the researchers fed it similar information about 300 more prisoners, leaving out whether they had

lived or died. The system, using logic it had developed from the first set of data, correctly predicted the outcome for 92 percent of those cases.

It found that death-row inmates with the highest chance of being executed are those with the lowest levels of education; neither the severity of the crime nor race could reliably predict a prisoner's fate."

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And special thanks to CADP intern Alice Kim for helping to put together the newsletter

Join Us for the CADP Annual Dinner!

Thursday, November 20, 2008

The Renaissance Hotel, 3801 Quebec, Denver

6:00 p.m. Cash Bar/Appetizers

7:00 p.m. Dinner & Program

Keynote Speaker: Abe Bonowitz

Abolitionist of the Year award to Representative Paul Weissman

Tickets: \$50 per person

\$30 students/low-income

Purchase your tickets online by visiting www.coadp.org or mail your check (payable to CADP) with names of guests and dinner preferences to:

CADP Dinner, c/o Randy Canney, 1733 High St, Denver, CO 80218.



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